NOTES FOR REMARKS
ON THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF
POLAR BEAR PASS NATIONAL WILDLIFE AREA
BY THE
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POND INLET, N.W.T.
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IT IS A PARTICULARLY PLEASANT TASK THAT I HAVE TODAY IN MAKING THIS ANNOUNCEMENT SINCE IT DEALS WITH THE LONG TERM PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT OF AN AREA WHICH IS WIDELY RECOGNIZED AS VERY SPECIAL IN ECOLOGICAL TERMS AND HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS AN "ARCTIC OASIS".

DURING THE 1960S, INDIAN AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS CANADA MADE A FIRM COMMITMENT TO THE CONCEPT OF SETTING ASIDE AREAS FOR LONG-TERM ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH. AT THAT TIME, THE MINISTER OF DIAND STATED THAT ECOLOGICAL RESERVES WOULD FORM AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR LAND MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION PROGRAM.

THE DEPARTMENT ACTIVELY SUPPORTED THE WORK OF THE INTERNATIONAL BIOLOGICAL PROGRAM (IBP) WHICH, THROUGH ITS TWO NORTHERN CONSERVATION PANELS, SELECTED AND DESCRIBED AREAS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER THE PROGRAM. BY 1974, THE TWO PANELS PUT TOGETHER INFORMATION ON APPROXIMATELY 150 AREAS IN THE NORTH. THESE ARE OFTEN REFERRED TO AS THE IBP ECOLOGICAL SITES.

THE FOLLOWING YEAR, ONE OF MY PREDECESSORS GAVE APPROVAL-IN-PRINCIPLE TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NUMBER OF ECOLOGICAL RESERVES NORTH OF 60°. NOW, I AM PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST ECOLOGICAL RESERVE IN THE NORTH, WHICH WILL BE KNOWN AS THE POLAR BEAR PASS NATIONAL WILDLIFE AREA.

DEDICATING POLAR BEAR PASS AS AN ECOLOGICAL RESERVE, ASSURES IT OF THE LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION PRESCRIBED UNDER THE IBP PROGRAM. USING THE EXISTING LEGISLATION, IN THIS CASE THE CANADA WILDLIFE ACT, FIRMLY PLACES ECOLOGICAL VALUES AS THE PRIORITY RESOURCE.

ESTABLISHING THIS FIRST ECOLOGICAL RESERVE HAS BEEN A LENGTHY PROCESS INVOLVING INTERESTED PEOPLE, ORGANIZATIONS AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES -- TERRITORIAL, AS WELL AS FEDERAL. I WOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT MY DEPARTMENT REMAINS COMMITTED TO THIS POLICY OF PROTECTION TO SPECIFIC IDENTIFIED AREAS AND WE INTEND TO PROCEED WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NORTHERN ECOLOGICAL RESERVES.

CURRENTLY, MY OFFICIALS ARE PREPARING A DISCUSSION PAPER DEALING WITH A COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION POLICY FOR THE NWT AND THE YUKON, AS WELL AS A STRATEGY FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION. I HOPE TO CIRCULATE THE PAPER IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO ENABLE ALL THOSE INTERESTED IN THIS IMPORTANT SUBJECT TO CONTRIBUTE TO ITS DEVELOPMENT.

AS WELL, WE ARE IN THE ADVANCED STAGES OF PUTTING IN PLACE OUR NORTHERN LAND USE PLANNING POLICY. REMAINING IBP ECOLOGICAL SITES WILL BE CONSIDERED WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THESE TWO POLICIES. IT IS OUR VIEW THAT SUCH SITES CAN ONLY BE PROPERLY IDENTIFIED, EVALUATED AND ULTIMATELY PROTECTED WHEN VIEWED IN THE COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLANNING PROCESS.

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THE TWO NORTHERN CONSERVATION PANELS SET UP DURING THE COURSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL BIOLOGICAL PROGRAM DID A MAGNIFICENT JOB IN PREPARING THE NECESSARY INFORMATION ABOUT THESE PROPOSED ECOLOGICAL SITES. TO MAKE THIS INFORMATION MORE WIDELY AVAILABLE, WE INTEND TO PUBLISH AN INFORMATION BOOKLET CONTAINING DETAILS OF EACH SITE AND OUTLINING INTERIM MEASURES ALREADY TAKEN TO PROTECT THEM.

IT IS OUR INTENTION TO EVALUATE THE PROPOSALS BY THE PANELS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS FOR PARKS AND RECREATIONAL AREAS, BIRD SANCTUARIES, ECOLOGICAL RESERVES AND WILDLIFE AREAS, ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SITES ETC.

TO DO THIS WORK EFFECTIVELY, I SEE THE NEED TO WORK CLOSELY WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC, CONCERNED ORGANIZATIONS, NATIVE GROUPS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.

WHILE DISCUSSIONS ON OUR COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION POLICY GET UNDERWAY AND AN APPROPRIATE MECHANISM FOR SCREENING POTENTIAL ECOLOGICAL RESERVES IS ESTABLISHED, WE WILL ENSURE THAT THE IBP ECOLOGICAL SITES CONTINUE TO BE FULLY PROTECTED. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE INTEGRITY OF THESE SITES WHICH ARE PROTECTED UNDER THE TERRITORIAL LAND USE REGULATIONS, IS MAINTAINED PENDING THEIR FINAL DISPOSITION.

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